

# **CAPITALISING ON THE CLOUD**

*Why should legal firms be considering hosted IT?*



***“We have moved very quickly from a situation of ‘if cloud computing ever takes off for law firms’ to one of, ‘when firms switch to the cloud’***

*Charles Christian*

*Orange Rag, February 2011*



***“Cloud computing is not just a buzzword anymore. If 2010 was the year that cloud computing went mainstream, then 2011 will be the year that companies have to get their cloud strategy sorted.”***

*Tim Weber*

*Business Editor, BBC News, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2011*

# Introduction



At any one time there's always a particular hot topic within legal IT literature but often the focus can shift rapidly from subject to subject. However, right now hosted solutions seem to be the issue that has grabbed the attention of legal IT professionals and, unlike others, it doesn't look like it will be letting go anytime soon. So, what's the reason for the enduring appeal of hosted solutions to those writing about legal IT and their respective readerships?

The first thing to point out is that amongst suppliers of hosted IT solutions to legal firms it is no surprise that the model has come to the forefront of legal IT, indeed many will be wondering why it has taken so long. DPS Software has been supplying hosted solutions for the past 10 years but has really noticed an explosion in uptake during the last two.

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A major reason for this is the increasing availability and decreasing cost of the high-speed internet lines necessary for a hosted system to perform well. The benefits of a hosted solution have always been clear to see but the model's cost-effectiveness has been blunted in the past by the need for expensive internet connections. This is no longer a barrier though as prices have plummeted across the board while in geographical terms the availability of these lines has improved immeasurably.

This has moved the benefits of hosted IT well within the reach of legal practices of all sizes. These benefits are enough to make anyone involved in the operation of a legal firm sit up and take notice. However, before we take a closer look at these benefits in the next section we'll identify some fears and myths about hosted IT that may be presented by more sceptical quarters.



**GOT QUESTIONS  
ABOUT THE  
CLOUD?**

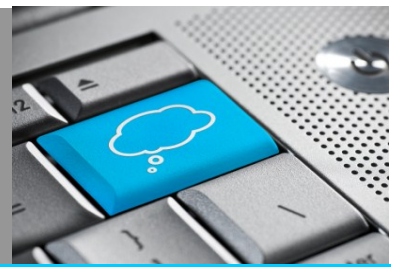
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# Dispelling some myths about Hosted IT.



## **“The internet is not a reliable infrastructure for delivering IT solutions.”**

In the past this may have been true but internet connections have improved rapidly and substantially over the last few years in 4 key areas – Capacity, Reliability, Availability and Affordability. High-bandwidth lines have become cheaper and more accessible and the internet service providers, operating in a hugely competitive market, now need to offer ‘near-bulletproof’ SLAs to customers.

There have also been concerns raised over remote working capabilities due to the availability of internet connections on the move. However, finding a reliable Internet connection in a major city or hotel or even on public transport is far easier than it once was.

## **“The transition to cloud-based computing will be disruptive to our work.”**

Persuading people to alter the way that they’ve done things for years is hardly ever a straightforward task and when convincing key decision makers to make the switch and embrace cloud computing a common objection is that change will just be a disruption to their work.

However, with DPS managing the transition it means a decade of experience will be brought to bear in the deployment of your cloud solution – take a look at the case study focused on Hadens Solicitors and the DPS ‘route to the cloud’ later in this paper. With DPS support the transition can be completed quickly and efficiently and your firm can start reaping the benefits of hosted IT.

## **“My firm’s data won’t be as secure if we move to a cloud solution.”**

When data is being looked after by another party, it’s right and proper that security issues are raised but in reality hosted IT can be seen as a more secure option.

Recent times have seen that the biggest source of confidential document leaks is more likely to have been a misplaced USB stick. DPS view security as critical to our hosted solutions and, with the added help of a bit of common sense, firms would actually benefit from more robust security after the move to The Cloud.

With DPS your data is held in a secure data centre, is regularly backed-up and stored off-site. Your system is also protected by the top of the range anti-spam & anti-virus software and, of course, with the remote working capabilities you have there is no longer any need to carry data on mobile storage devices.

## **And finally... “It’s too early.”**

Why? The Cloud is not a brand new idea – DPS has been supplying hosted legal IT solutions for 10 years now. The reason it is now in the public eye is that initial problems have been overcome and the infrastructure is now in place to make it a viable and valuable model. The sooner legal firms adopt hosted IT, the sooner they can take advantage of the benefits and it’s these that we’ll look at in the next section.



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# Why your firm should be considering The Cloud.



## Focus on Legal Work

The days are gone when legal firms could afford to employ entire IT departments dedicated to supporting their systems. In 2011 firms and their staff must be focused on their core legal work to achieve efficiency and growth. IT is essential but not core just like utilities in your office – electricity is essential but it's not likely that you own your own power plant! With your IT hosted and maintained by DPS your firm and it's staff will be free to focus on their core legal work and achieving new levels of efficiency and client service.

## The 'Desktop in The Cloud'

For most solicitors and staff at legal firms there are certain software applications that have now become essential to their working day. For example, their practice or case management system, Microsoft Office with programs such as Word and Excel, and Microsoft Outlook for their emails. With hosted IT solutions your entire desktop can be hosted on our servers and delivered through your internet connection. It also ensures you have the latest software versions available as updates are applied automatically.



## Fixed monthly costs – easy to budget

At any time, but especially during a period of austerity, an element of certainty in your overheads can allow for accurate budgeting and cash flow planning. Through DPS hosting you pay fixed monthly costs and avoid the unexpected costs that are often associated with maintenance of an IT infrastructure.

## Scalability

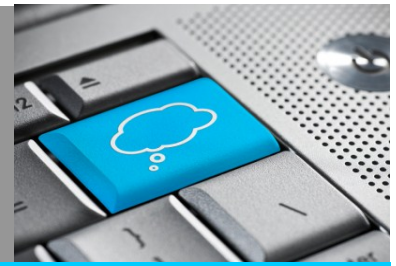
The hosted model provides an IT infrastructure for your firm that offers scalability beyond anything offered by more traditional methods of delivering a system. At any time user licences can be added and as the model is charged for on a per head basis increases in your fixed costs will only occur as the company grows.



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## Business Continuity and Improved Operational Capabilities

Business Continuity (BC) has become increasingly important to all businesses and law firms are no different. In fact, with time-sensitive processes and clients placing a lot of trust in their solicitor to deal with important matters, legal firms are amongst those businesses where a solid BC policy is most critical.

With a hosted solution from DPS Software you can also provide your staff with remote working capabilities – if weather or some other unforeseen event means they can't make it to the office or if a lot of their work is field-based they can still access and work on their case files.

You can also put your trust in the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) offered by DPS which range from between 99% to 99.9% uptime depending on the options selected by the client. Your data will be accessible and it will also be protected by top of the range anti-spam and anti-virus software.



**'43% of firms that experience a disaster never reopen and 51% close within 2 years – Just 6% survive long term.'**

## Disaster Recovery

Going hand-in-hand with business continuity are your firm's disaster recovery capabilities and hosting with DPS allows you to rest assured you have a high-level policy in place. According to a study by Gartner '43% of firms that experience a disaster never reopen and 51% close within 2 years – Just 6% survive long term.'

Disasters are (thankfully) rare but it's stats like these from Gartner that mean you need to be prepared for the worst and thanks to our secure climate-controlled data centre, regular back-ups and off-site storage of backed-up coupled with remote-working capabilities, your firm has the infrastructure needed to recover should it happen.

**So, it's safe to say the rationale for change is solid and obvious. With this established the next step for any firm is to identify a supplier they can trust to deliver the service they need.**

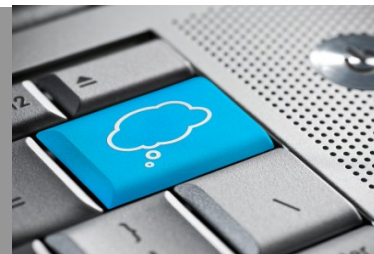
**This is where DPS Software's unique offering comes in to the picture.**



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# DPS Software: Your 'one-stop-shop' for hosted legal IT



DPS Software, unlike most other hosting providers, offer a 'one-stop-shop' approach to implementing a hosted solution in the legal practice. DPS has over 25 years experience of working with the legal sector. The company's background lies in legal case management and accounts software and this is coupled with the expertise gained from a decade of developing fully-managed hosted IT solutions and the infrastructure necessary to offer them.

As DPS Managing Director, Osman Ismail points out: "With DPS there are no middle men or hosting partners – we host the IT of legal practices in our own secure data centre which is maintained by our experienced engineers. If a firm is taking advantage of DPS practice management software then all their IT needs, both hardware and software, are catered for and supported by DPS. It's so simple and makes complete sense."

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This fully-managed approach facilitates the delegation of a firm's IT responsibilities at a time when this is exactly what they need to do. A sound IT infrastructure has become crucial to the majority of successful legal practices but an increasingly competitive market demands they focus 100% on their legal work. Allocating time and resources to the continual maintenance of systems means these needs clash, but hosting allows your firm to cater to both.

The DPS '*IT department as a service*' approach to hosting takes a firm's IT requirements and builds them into a management structure that allows them to focus on their core legal business. Their systems are always fully maintained and managed by a dedicated support team who are just a phone call away.

This focus on legal work lends itself to a more efficient practice and improving efficiency is something DPS has emphasised throughout a quarter-century of providing case management and accounts software. DPS offer one of the most powerful and robust PMS packages on the market and hosted clients can take advantage of this, as well as the full suite of Microsoft Office software, with the added benefit that the latest versions will always be available at no extra cost. Hosting with DPS also allows users to connect to their case files remotely meaning you can always keep up with the 24/7 nature of legal work today.

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# DPS Software: Your 'one-stop-shop' for hosted legal IT



Regardless of the size of a firm security is now of paramount importance and there are benefits to be found in hosting in this area as well. Hosting with DPS means your data is stored in a secure data centre and regularly backed-up both on- and off-site. The solution also allows firms to demonstrate high-level business continuity and disaster recovery capabilities. Developing policies and processes in these areas can be time-consuming and expensive, with hosting you have them instantly and at no extra cost.



Of course, in the current environment cost is a major, if not the primary, consideration in any legal firm's decision-making process. Firms are now looking for the most cost-efficient route but also for an element of certainty in their outlay in order to budget effectively. The DPS hosting model offers exactly this through the combination of fixed monthly costs, minimal initial outlay and scalability. DPS hosted solutions are charged per head and a firm's costs will only increase when staff numbers increase, making the model perfect for growing firms. There are no surprises – No periodic hardware replacement costs; No hardware maintenance costs; No software upgrade costs.

As Osman concludes, "The benefits are obvious and far outweigh any short-term hassle that the transition to a hosted infrastructure may pose. Hosted services represent the future in legal IT and in challenging times

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One such firm already taking advantage of a DPS hosted solution is Hadens Solicitors, based in Walsall in the West Midlands, and in the next section of this paper we'll take a look at their decision to go down the hosted route. DPS Software, unlike most other hosting providers, offer a 'one-stop-shop' approach to implementing a hosted solution in the legal practice. DPS has over 25 years experience of working with the legal sector. The company's background lies in legal case management and accounts software and this is coupled with the expertise gained from a decade of developing fully-managed hosted IT solutions and the infrastructure necessary to offer them.



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# Hadens Solicitors: A hosted IT case study



Hadens Solicitors, based in Walsall, is a well-established mid-sized firm with over 80 years experience of providing legal services to clients across the West Midlands. The firm has departments specialising in various areas of law including Residential Conveyancing, Family Law, Wills & Estate Planning and Employment Law. Hadens has utilised DPS case management and legal accounts software for several years, running many of DPS's specialist modules across their range of departments.

In 2010 the firm's senior management decided it was time to take the next step with regards to their office IT solution as part of their continued commitment to delivering proactive and professional client service. Through their relationship with DPS they began to look at the possibilities that a hosted solution could offer.

Hadens' management had been aware of hosted IT services but as mentioned in the previous section, issues with the speed and cost of internet connections had prevented adoption in previous years. However, with those factors a problem of the past, what exactly convinced Hadens that a hosted solution from DPS Software was the correct option for the firm?

Carol Remy, Practice Manager at Hadens, comments: 'As a multi-disciplinary practice its hugely important, if we are to achieve maximum efficiency, that our specialist departments can focus completely on client work without having to devote time, attention or even dedicated staff to our IT. What we needed was to know that our systems were managed, supported and secure.'

'Once we assessed in-depth exactly what benefits a hosted solution offered to the practice it became obvious this was the route we wanted to go down. No other method of implementing a robust IT infrastructure could match the hosted solution offered by DPS in terms of cost-efficiency, the applications we could access and the managed service provided.'

'Our past experience meant that in DPS we knew we had a legal software provider we could trust and by hosting with them we were able to consolidate our IT costs as everything was provided through the hosted model.'

DPS have a wealth of experience in working with the legal sector and their team of engineers and technical support staff have assisted numerous firms in their transition to a hosted system. We appreciate the value of our clients' time and the inconvenience IT disruption can cause and therefore offer all the support necessary to make the changeover as smooth as possible.

'Any transitional phase comes with its difficulties,' continues Carol, 'but DPS always made sure they were on hand to listen to any issues we had and to find a solution. Ultimately the means justify the ends when the gains offered by hosting are so obvious and significant but nevertheless DPS made the transition as painless as possible.'

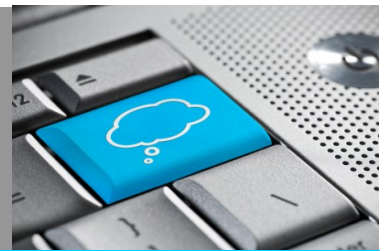
'Now we're well in to 2011 and with the move to hosting complete we can begin to see the benefits the solution offers having a positive impact. It goes without saying that any change within an established firm like ourselves comes with risk attached. It's all about making the right decision at the right time and our experience is testament to the fact that now really is the time to seriously consider hosted IT.'



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# Managing the transition: The DPS 'Route to the Cloud'



**Sales Completion: Agreement between DPS and client is signed.**



**Project Team Organisation: The project team at DPS is put together and client is provided with the team structure.**



**Initial Project Meeting: DPS project team meet with client at client site.**



**Site Audit: DPS project technical staff visit client site for a full day to audit hardware and communications equipment.**



**Technical Development at DPS data centre: The DPS project team build the technical environment for your firm at the DPS data centre.**



**Testing of applications/DPS app development: All applications to be used by the firm over the hosted solution are installed and tested (this includes Microsoft Office, Outlook and your case management software). At this stage the development of DPS applications begins with the application development lead.**



**Data transfer: All client data is transferred to the DPS data centre out of working hours ahead of the 'go live' date.**



**DPS Training, hosted desktop introductions and pilot testing: All users at the firm are trained on the relevant DPS applications (if necessary), introductory courses are run to inform staff about their hosted desktops and the applications they have access to. Users are logged in to the system to carry out pilot testing.**



**Go Live: Hosted solution goes live at the client site. During the 'go live' days DPS technical and project management staff will be present to offer support throughout the transition.**



**Client support & Ongoing Account Management: DPS take client care seriously and you can rest assured that after the transition to a hosted solution you'll be looked after in a structured yet personable way. As well as having the DPS technical support team available by phone day-to-day and the support of DPS field engineers, you will also be assigned a dedicated account manager who will schedule regular visits to your site to continually assess and gauge your system performance and requirements on an ongoing basis.**



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# Summary



It's not often that the IT world is unanimous about future directions but on the subject of the cloud and the move towards hosted IT this does appear to be the case. Indeed, due to the impact and benefits of cloud computing, many IT experts are predicting that businesses owning their own IT infrastructure could become the exception rather than the norm in the very near future.

Some firms, as we have seen in the case study focused on Hadens Solicitors, are taking advantage of hosted IT from DPS and all the benefits working in the cloud offers already. With the IT world now geared towards the era of cloud computing it is these early-adopters that will lead the way, gain competitive advantage, and show others exactly why they need to look at their own transition to hosted IT without any delay.

At DPS we have the experience to make sure this transition goes as smoothly as possible and through our 'one-stop-shop' approach to hosted solutions for legal firms you can implement your firm's entire IT infrastructure through DPS. It really is that simple – The Cloud is a major sea change in the IT world but this doesn't mean your firm's move towards it has to bring major disruption.

***The Cloud is on the horizon – Move your firm ahead of the game and take advantage of cloud computing through DPS hosted solutions now.***

## You can find out more at:

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[www.legalcloudhosting.com](http://www.legalcloudhosting.com)

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